

Metro Regional Parks and Greenspaces Advisory Committee

February 5, 2002

6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Metro Regional Center

Chair Jay Hamlin called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Other committee members present were Rick Charriere, David Manhart, Sylvia Milne, Chris Noble, Richard Reynolds and Seth Tane. Also in attendance were Metro Executive Officer Mike Burton, Charles Ciecko, Ron Klein, Patricia Sullivan and Jeff Tucker.

The proposal to increase solid waste excise tax as a revenue source for parks was introduced by Mike Burton, who will be presenting it to Council next month. He provided background on the need for such an action, but stressed that this will not be a long-term solution to the Dept.'s funding needs, only a stop-gap measure allowing time to identify a permanent solution. He has introduced the topic to the Regional Environmental Management Dept. and received positive feedback. (The possibility of a sunset clause in the plan was mentioned should voters later approve a ballot measure providing long-term funding.) Burton's FY02-03 Budget, which will also go before Council next month, is based on the premise that this increase in excise tax will become effective. If it does not, the budget will need to be amended to reflect the decrease in revenues.

The proposal calls for a \$1 per ton of solid waste amounting to a \$.05 to \$.07 increase on a 32-gallon can to residents with garbage service. This plan is estimated to raise an additional \$1.2 million per year for Metro's parks and greenspaces.

Despite cost-cutting measures by the Dept., if additional funding is not secured, its financial reserves will be exhausted by 2005. Charles Ciecko listed programs and services which may need to be reduced or terminated, without increased funding. Some of these included:

- environmental education programs
- regional trail planning
- habitat restoration and ongoing removal of invasive species
- growing list of deferred maintenance projects

Ciecko outlined where the added revenue would be used:

- provide another park ranger for the landbanking program
- retain one trail planner to help develop the Regional Trails and Greenways Plan
- select deferred maintenance projects at a modest level
- reduce the use of financial reserves from the Parks Trust Fund
- restore habitat on acquired lands
- attract outside partners to help in securing grants
- develop and enhance volunteer recognition and recruitment program
- replenish principal from the Smith & Bybee Lakes Trust Fund

Burton spoke of the need for the RPAGAC's support and of the need to "spread the word" on the value of the parks system. The discussion which followed included the following points:

- The metro region has the lowest solid waste rates on the west coast.
- All revenue raised will be dedicated to the Regional Parks and Greenspaces Dept.
- A suggestion was offered to raise revenue with the overage from a voluntary program whereby utility users could elect to "round up" their utility bills to the next whole dollar.
- A suggestion was made to research the likelihood of any objections from the business community.
- Funds raised from Burton's proposal could answer many of the concerns raised in the January 8, 2002 letter from RPAGAC to the Executive Officer.

Questions were raised as to whom Advisory Committee members might address their comments and concerns regarding Burton's proposal. The following suggestions were made:

Metro Council Presiding Officer Carl Hosticka
 The Councilor representing the district of the RPAGAC member
 Chair of Natural Resources Committee
 Chair of Solid Waste and Recycling Committee
 and/or Metro Executive Officer Mike Burton

Staff will provide any other contact information requested. Addresses of CPO representatives were also sought, but will need to be narrowed to specific CPO's or neighborhood associations. A consensus was reached that a letter be drafted and sent from RPAGAC to Metro Council endorsing Burton's proposal. It will be reviewed at the March 5th meeting and sent the following day.

The agenda item to appoint a representative and alternative to the Water Resources Policy Advisory Committee was tabled until next month.

Updates

Ron Klein provided information and materials about the **Let's Talk, Regional Conference and Community Workshops** to be held March 15 and 16. Sylvia Milne expressed an interest in participating. Parks staff will look into the possibility of obtaining "scholarships" for committee members who would like to attend. The deadline to register is February 28. Volunteers are also being sought to act as facilitators.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.